



NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Reports Hepatitis C Investigation Progressing *Number of Related Cases in Minot at 35*

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) recently received laboratory test results for additional Hepatitis C tests performed in the Minot area in October. The results confirm that eight additional people have the related strain of the virus, bringing the total number of Hepatitis C cases in this outbreak to 35. The department emphasized that these cases do not represent recent infections, but are part of the original outbreak investigation.

The North Dakota Department of Health reminds residents that you cannot catch Hepatitis C the same way you can catch a common cold or other virus. Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person infected with the Hepatitis C virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. The Hepatitis C virus is not spread by sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing, and it is not spread through food or water. You cannot catch Hepatitis C from visiting with someone or being around someone who has the virus unless the blood of that person comes in contact with your blood. That does not happen under normal, everyday circumstances.

The investigation in Minot continues. According to Tracy Miller, state epidemiologist for the North Dakota Department of Health, “At this time, we have made progress in analyzing data, which has helped narrow the focus of the investigation. However, we have not conclusively identified the source; as soon as we have clearer information concerning the outbreak, we will share that with the health community and the public.”

As part of the investigation, the NDDoH has tested approximately 500 people who may have had exposure to the virus that is the focus of this outbreak. Those blood tests have been sent to laboratories for further analysis. The department continues to contact others who may have been exposed and is providing them with information about testing.

“The additional information we receive from these tests will greatly assist us with our investigation and move us towards the goal of stopping this outbreak,” added Miller.

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Members of the public who have questions about either this outbreak or Hepatitis C in general may call the department's Public Health Hotline toll-free at 1.866.207.2880. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Information is also available on the NDDoH website at www.ndhealth.gov (click on link in the Current Issues Box), our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ndhealth, and on Twitter with the hashtag #ndhepc.

Reporters who need more information may call Tracy Miller, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2387.

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